MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

Held in Washington, D. C., June 19,1942.

The twelfth meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1942 was held in its office in the Interior Department Building on Friday, June 19, 1942. The following members were present:

Mr. Clarke, Chairman,
Dr. Cret,
Mr. Holabird,
Mr. Poor,
also H. P. Caemmerer, Secretary and Administrative Officer.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING: The Minutes of the Meeting held May 2, 1942, were approved.

2. DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL, MARITIME COMMISSION: Under date of June 10, 1942, a letter was received from Rear Admiral Emory S. Land, Chairman of the United States Maritime Commission, with design for a Distinguished Service Medal, as follows:

Commission of Fine Arts,
Interior Department Building,
Washington, D.C.

Gentlemen:

In accordance with telephone conversations among Mr. Hooker, Assistant to Commissioner Maccauley, Mr. deBouthillier, Chief of our Styling and Furnishing Branch, and Mr. Caemmerer, I am forwarding herewith a colored study of the proposed design for distinguished service medal to be awarded seamen in accordance with the terms of Public Law No.524, 77th Congress, approved April 11, 1942.

This medal is of particular significance at this time because of the beneficial effects it is hoped it will have on the morale of our seamen. The President has consented to present the first medal at a ceremony to be held at the White House, and the Maritime Commission feels that it is of special importance that the first presentation be made as soon as possible. I hope therefore that we may look forward to having your comments, and, if possible, your approval of this design at an early date.

Yours very truly,
E. S. Land,
Chairman

The secretary reported that Mr. deBouthillier of the Maritime Commission had informed him that that Commission favors this design but that it would be understood that it would be submitted to a competent medalist, who would receive at least $1,000 for execution of the models. The design, which was made in the office of the Maritime Commission, showed on the obverse an eagle holding a trident in its claws and on the reverse a typical maritime ship and place for an inscription.

The Commission inspected the design and disapproved it as drawn. The Commission felt, however, that the design had elements which in the hands of a competent medalist would result in a good medal. The Commission recommended that Paul Manship be commissioned as the artist for this medal, and Rear Admiral Land was informed accordingly (Exhibit A).

2. ARMY OF OCCUPATION MEDAL, WAR DEPARTMENT: Under date of June 17, 1942, the following letter was received from Major General J. A. Ulio, The Adjutant General, with designs, and a set of models, for the Army of Occupation Medal, as follows:

Dear Mr. Clarke:

I am transmitting,herewith , proposed designs for the Army of Occupation of Germany Medal.

This Medal was authorized by Public Law 322, 77th Congress, Chapter 501, 1st Session, H.R.5750.

It would be appreciated if you would furnish this office, at your earliest convenience, the advice of the Commission with reference to the accompanying designs.

Very truly yours,

J. A. Ulio,
Major General
The Adjutant General.

The secretary stated that the following designs had been received:

A Design (as well as models) by T. A. Rovelstad,
1. Design by Wm. Marks Simpson,
2. Design by C. P. Jennewein,
3. Design by Edward McCartan,
4. Design by Harry P. Camden,
5. Design by Gaetano Cecere,
6. Design by Leo Friedlander.

The Commission inspected the designs. The design and models submitted by Mr. Rovelstad showed a portrait head of General Pershing on the obverse and an eagle on the reverse. The Commission thought that Mr. Rovelstad had done very good work and that it was an excellent likeness of General Pershing.

Major J. H. Heil, Jr., who was present, stated that the War Department has a strict rule that no portrait of a living person in the Service should appear on a medal. The Commission thereupon approved the design for the reverse and advised that Mr. Rovelstad should submit a new design for the obverse. Dr. Cret suggested that the head of a soldier with the helmet of 1918 might be appropriate.

The Chairman stated that the other designs received are all from competent artists and that they could be considered by the War Department for commissions to execute other medals.

A report was sent to Major General Ulio (Exhibit B)

Major Heil reported that the War Department expects that the Bill (S.2404) which passed the Senate on April 27, 1942, will also be adopted by the House of Representatives in a few days. This provides for a Legion of Merit medal and a Medal for Merit.

3. MEDALS AND INSIGNIA: The Chairman reported that, in view of the fact that several Bills are pending in Congress for medals due to the War and that several establishments of the Government have undertaken to design medals, the secretary had called attention to the desirability of having the Government establishments reminded of the Executive Order of July 28, 1921, with regard to medals and insignia; that the Chairman had therefore sent a letter to most of the Government establishments, as follows:

May 18, 1942.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

The Commission of Fine Arts have noted that, since the attack on Pearl Harbor, several Bills have been introduced in Congress to authorize the presentation of medals. It is also noted that several Departments and independent establishments of the Government have undertaken to have designs prepared for models.

This Commission respectfully call attention to the fact that by Executive Order, dated July 28, 1921, the President of the United States directs that "Essential matters relating to the design of medals, insignia, and coins produced by the executive departments---shall be submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts for advice as to the merits of such designs before the executive officer having charge of the same shall approve thereof."

It is the practice of some bureaus of the Government to have designs for medals prepared in their own offices, and then arrange for the production of the medal by having commercial medal manufacturing companies make models and produce the medal. The Commission of Fine Arts contend that this is not conducive to good results. Furthermore, it seems unfair to the recipients, who, if entitled to medals, should be given ones that they would be proud to wear.

We have in the United States many able sculptors who also qualify as medallists, whose services we believe should be called upon to make designs and models for medals, so as to give assurance that each medal may be a work of art and worthy of the service which it commemorates.

The Commission will be pleased to cooperate with you in this matter. For the Commission of Fine Arts:

Sincerely yours,

Gilmore D. Clarke,
Chairman.

No letter was sent to the War Department nor to the Navy Department, since they are cooperating with the Commission in this matter. The replies received indicated a desire on the part of the Government establishments to cooperate. A very encouraging letter was received from President Roosevelt, which was much appreciated, and which was read at the meeting, as follows:

See also copy of letter from President Roosevelt (C-1)

Mr. Underwood stated that these buildings will be practically fire-proof, to be built with Semesto Board, which is a fire resistant material containing asbestos and celotex.

The Commission expressed regret that some of the dormitories are to be built in Government park areas, but realized that this is a War Emergency. Mr. Underwood stated that the contract for a building provides that it shall be demolished one year after the close of the War. The Commission were pleased to hear this and approved the designs with that understanding.

(Exhibit D)

5. DESIGN FOR STATE DEPARTMENT ANNEX: Under date of May 13,1942, the following letter was received from Mr. George Howe, Supervising Architect:

Chairman,
The Commission of Fine Arts,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

There are forwarded to you herewith, for comment and advice, perspective and preliminary sketches,consisting of plans and elevations, for the proposed new Federal Office Building No.4, this city.

This office will appreciate receiving at the earliest possible date any comments which the Commission of Fine Arts may wish to make with respect to these drawings.

Very truly yours,
George Howe,
Supervising Architect.

The Commission noted that the design had been made by R. Stanley-Brown, consulting architect, and that it is proposed to erect the building on the west side of Lafayette Square, Congress having authorized the erection of a building on the west half of the square (No.167) for a State Department Annex. The building was designed to face Seventeenth Street, Between Pennsylvania Avenue and H Street.

The Chairman read the following letter which he had received from Hon. F. A. Delano, Chairman of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, on the subject:

COPY
National Capital Park and Planning Commission,
Washington

May 20, 1942.

My dear Mr. Clarke:

About ten days ago the Director of the Budget showed me a floor plan for a proposed building on the west half of Block 167. Mr.Smith said he had learned that temporary buildings two and three stories high were costing as much as $10 a square foot; whereas a permanent building of the same dimensions would cost only something like $14.00 For that reason he was thinking of recommending a permanent building of concrete which could be clothed later with a veneer of stone, plus such ornamentation as might be desirable. I said I thought the idea was a good one and should be studied. About a week later, at the last meeting of the Park and Planning Commission, there was thrown upon the table a photograph of a building 80 feet high to cornice line, and with added height with setbacks, which I thought looked more like a factory than a dignified office building; but my chief complaint of it was that it ignored completely the provisions of the Shipstead Act which was passed at the earnest solicitation of the Park and Planning Commission to protect just such sacred areas as the surroundings of the Nation's Capitol and the White House grounds. On May 18th, while my blood was still boiling, I dictated and sent off a letter to Mr. Harold D. Smith, of which the enclosed is a copy. It is more forceful than diplomatic, but I don't think it is seriously in error on that account.

Considering the plan coolly, I think it proposes to crowd the lot unnecessarily on all fronts. The ultimate South front and the East front are of great importance. The ultimate North front is important. On the other hand, the West front is less important, and penthouses for elevators, air conditioning, etc., can be permitted on that front and not hurt the whole building; but I do hope the exigencies of the occasion will not influence us to approve a plan which will be permanently bad.

Since seeing the above mentioned plan, I have also seen a plan for the East side of Lafayette Square where the Belasco Theatre and the Cosmos Club property have already been bought. I think that plan is pretty bad and violates the principles of the Shipstead Act.

Lastly, I think we can build a concrete three-story building on the West half of Block 167 which will serve the purpose of a temporary building, and yet relate it to a project for a permanent building of acceptable appearance.

Very sincerely yours,

Frederick A. Delano,

Chairman.

Enclosure

The Commission felt that this matter should receive very careful consideration. The project was discussed briefly with Mr. Howe. The Commission recommended that the project be made the subject of further study, for a building to occupy the entire square (167) and in relation to the treatment on the east side of Lafayette Park, which has been authorized by Congress, and also a possible treatment for Government buildings on the north side of Lafayette Park. The proximity of these proposed buildings to the White House has caused this to be a very important pending project of long standing. Mr. Howe said that he would have further studies made accordingly and submit them to the Commission.

6. Y. M. C. A. BUILDING: Mr. Francis Sullivan, Architect, reported that he had given study to the proposed project for a Y. M. C. A. building near the new War Department Building in Arlington County, Virginia, and that indications are that the site, suggested by the Commission of Fine Arts at the May meeting, near Columbia Pike and Arlington Ridge Road, immediately south of "Navy Building No.2"can be made available. Mr. Sullivan presented a plot plan for a building at this site, which indicated that on account of a steep grade the building would have to be built on terraces and laid out horizontally. Both Mr. Holabird and Dr. Cret felt this was a decided improvement over the former triangular scheme suggested by Mr. Sullivan. He said he had not as yet made any elevations for a building at this site.

7. STATUE OF SIR WILLIAM BLACKSTONE: Mrs. Paul Bartlett, accompanied by Mr. Seymour Howard, architect, presented a preliminary sketch for a pedestal for the statue. The Commission felt that the pedestal was too low. Mr. Holabird and Dr. Cret made a sketch for Mr. Howard, suggesting the type of pedestal that would be suitable, and Mr. Clarke made suggestions

on the sketch that would give the statue an appropriate landscape setting.

Mr. Howard submitted a Memorandum(Exhibit E) concerning an Inscription for the pedestal that was thought to be very appropriate, as follows:

"Between England and America his Commentaries forged a link of common legal principles."

Mrs. Bartlett said she was conferring with Justice Groner in the matter of having legislation introduced in Congress authorizing the erection of the statue in the District of Columbia.

8. PAINTING FOR THE SOCIAL SECURITY BUILDING: Under date of June 19, 1942, the following letter was received from the Section of Fine Arts:

Dear Mr. Clarke:

Attached hereto is a design submitted by the Misses Ethel and Jenne Magafan as their proposal for the mural decoration of a single panel in the Board Room of the Social Security Building,Washington,D.C. A blueprint of the space is also attached.

The subject matter of a large landscape was suggested by Mr. Arthur Altmeyer, Chairman of the Social Security Board.

The comment and advice of the Commission of Fine Arts on this proposal will be greatly appreciated.

Cordially yours,
Edward B. Rowan, Assistant Chief,
Section of Fine Arts.

The painting was inspected by Mr. Poor, who recommended approval of it, with the suggestion that in the full scale drawing the artists avoid a tendency to have the forms of the mountain a bit too similar and lacking character. The color scheme of the painting is fine. A report was sent to Mr. Rowan accordingly (Exhibit F).

9. PAINTINGS OF WAR SCENES: Mr. Poor stated that he had received a Memorandum from the Section of Fine Arts stating that a communication had been sent to the Director of the Budget, recommending that an appropriation of about $250,000 be made available to create a Corps of Pictorial War Correspondents, who would depict pictorially main events occurring in this War. It is proposed to employ about 40 artists on a salary basis and

about 50 volunteer artists. Mr. Poor stated that the British Government is employing artists for similar work.

The Commission endorsed the project enthusiastically, and recommended that Mr. Poor draft a letter accordingly, to be sent by the Chairman to the President of the United States (Exhibit G).

10. FREER GALLERY OF ART: The Commission went to the Freer Gallery of Art to inspect a work of art submitted by Dr. Lodge, Curator, as follows:

1 Peach-blow bottle, Chinese,
K'ang Hsi period.

The Commission approved the purchase of this object (Exhibit H).

11. INSPECTION OF THE BLUE ROOM AT THE WHITE HOUSE: Under date of June 16, 1942, the following letter was received from Mr. H. G. Crim, Chief Usher at the White House:

My dear Major Clarke:

Sometime ago Major Ker and Mrs. Nesbitt entered into a contract with the Richmond Art Co., Richmond, Virginia, to redecorate the walls of the Blue Parlor at the White House. They selected material which had to be made by hand, and was probably a year in the making.

The Company has recently installed these new wall coverings in an unsatisfactory manner. We are now confronted with the problem of what to do under the circumstances. The funds for the payment of this work must be expended by June 30, 1942.

May we have the advice of your Commission in this regard.

Yours very truly,
H.G.Crim,
Chief Usher.

The Commission inspected the Blue Room about 1:00 p.m. The Commission, after careful inspection of the new wall coverings, expressed great disappointment in the work done, noting that it had been carelessly and improperly installed, and recommended that the work be rejected. A report was sent to Mr. Crim accordingly (Exhibit I).

12. CONFERENCE ON WAR POSTERS: Mr. Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of

Congress, and who has been serving as Director of the Office of Facts and Figures, accompanied by Mr. Thomas D. Mabry, Acting Chief of the Graphics Division of that office, conferred with the Commission on the subject of producing World War Posters.

Mr. Poor, speaking for the Commission, expressed the desirability of securing a finer pictorial expression in War Posters and to utilize the artists of the country to better advantage in this respect.

Mr. MacLeish outlined the work that is being done in the Graphics Division, which, he said, was arranged simply to get started on the project.

Everybody agreed a real need existed. After discussion as to the best way to proceed, it was decided that Mr. Mabry should go more fully into the matter and make plans in conference with Mr. Poor in New York.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT

WASHINGTON

JUN 5 1942

My dear Mr. Chairman:

Receipt is acknowledged of your letter of May 18, 1942, in which you point out the importance of there being submitted to the Fine Arts Commission for its approval, designs for medals and insignia that are produced by the executive departments.

It is the general policy of the Treasury Department to submit designs for such purposes, before they are adopted, for the judgment of your Commission as to their artistic merit. The value of the service rendered by your Commission, in this regard, has long been recognized.

Very truly yours,

D. W. Bell

Acting Secretary of the Treasury.

Honorable Gilmore D. Clarke,
Chairman, The Commission of Fine Arts,
Interior Department Building,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT C

FOR DEFENSE
BUY
UNITED
STATES
SAVINGS
BONDS
AND STAMPS

Hughes